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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the process of developing and designing a Japanese business course for intermediate level students at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo and for a non-credit intensive workshop for local business people. A needs assessment was conducted by means of a survey to find out the expectations and goals of students and prospective employers in the Buffalo area. Data were drawn from intermediate level students who were interested in taking a business Japanese class, and from 16 local companies that have relations with Japan. The results of the survey were used to develop the business language program at SUNY Buffalo. Appended materials include the student questionnaire, survey results, and the goals and objectives and content of the business Japanese program at the University of Buffalo. (JL)

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"Designing a Syllabus and Materials for Business Japanese: Needs Assessment of Students and Prospective Employers"

by

Setsue Shibata and Kazue Masuyama

This paper will describe the process of developing and designing a Japanese business language course for intermediate level students at the State University of New York at Buffalo and for a non-credit intensive workshop for local business people. We conducted a needs assessment to find out the expectations and goals of students and prospective employers in the Buffalo area. The data that were collected from intermediate level students who are interested in taking a business Japanese class, and from sixteen local companies that have relations with Japan. The results of this survey will be used to develop an effective business language program at SUNY Buffalo.

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I. Introduction

A recent survey by the Modern Language Association (MLA) indicates that enrollment in Japanese language classes at the college level has increased by 94.4% from 1986 to 1990 (MLA, 1991). At the State University of New York at Buffalo (UB), the number of students who take Japanese language courses has been increasing every year. 156 students enrolled in 1991 and the number grew to 233 in 1994, i.e., nearly 150 % increase. As the number of students increases, their motivations and goals to study Japanese have become more diversified, and the demand for the Japanese courses for specific purposes courses is growing dramatically. With rapid Japanese economic growth in the 1980s and Japan's status as an economic superpower, there is a need of higher education to offer courses in Business Japanese and culture.

This trend towards move students request in Business Japanese is not unique in Buffalo, but also can be seen in all U.S. The survey conducted by Jorden and Lambert pointed out that dramatic increases of students in Japanese courses seemed to be explained by students' strong motivation to improve their employment opportunities after graduation (Jorden and Lambert, 1991). Saito describes the growing interest in Business Japanese as a recognition by students of Japan's economic successes. Most students taking Japanese express the hope that their language skills will help their careers (Saito, 1993).

To meet the students' request, UB is currently developing and designing a Business Japanese course for Fall 1995. Since the goal to offer the new course is to satisfy the needs of both students and future employers, the first step of developing the curriculum is to assess the students' expectations and goals for the course, as well as those of potential. It is not surprising that there are some discrepancies between the students' expectations and these of the employer, because the most students have little or no experience working in the real business world, and may have little knowledge of what the prospective employers expect from their employees regarding their Japanese language skills and knowledge of Japanese business culture.

Many researchers remark that the harmonious development of the world economy is possible only with good communication, and that it is necessary for students who plan to work in an international setting to make a serious commitment to practical language abilities for their future career (Austin et al., 1994). The majority of the research conducted in this area is about French, Spanish, and German, and little research has been done for Japanese. Students expect in the programs in Business French, Spanish and German to have near-native language skills, to be attuned to cultural differences, have a business training foundation, and have experience living and working in these countries (Suarez, 1993). Many business language curriculum developers suggest several critical points to design the program: internship training, authentic experience combined with pedagogical segments that help students "make sense" of their experience, using real-world events by having learners take on active roles of the people who are involved in such business situations, etc. (Austin et al., 1994). It is important to find out which business situations and business activities the students and the companies believe should be included in the instruction in order to design the program within the relatively limited length of the course schedule.

The purpose of this study is to find out the expectations and goals of the students and those of the local companies so that we can design and develop Business Japanese curriculum to meet the needs of both the students and the local companies. The purpose of the research is also to understand the current employment situation in the Buffalo area in order to provide appropriate advice for the students relating to career opportunities and placement.

II. Buffalo Community

1. Demographic Characteristics

Buffalo is the second largest city in New York State and ranks 30th in the nation. The population of Buffalo metropolitan area was 300,560 in 1994. Buffalo is rich in the ethnic heritage of its people, and is formed from several waves of immigration with principal areas of origin including Poland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain as well as African and Asian countries. The dominant ethnic groups are the Poles, Italians, Germans, Irish, and Blacks, with Hispanics

representing a fast-growing cultural influence. People from Hong-Kong are also a fast growing group in recent years. According to census in 1992, one quarter of the population is of Polish and Italian ancestry.

2. Economic Characteristics

In 1985 Buffalo ranked the 14th best place to live in the United States based on the characteristics of low crime, low living cost, high-quality of education, etc. The average household income in 1990 for the Buffalo area was $29,770. The major economic activities are as follows: manufacturing industries, health care industry, aircraft, and flour milling.

Manufacturing Industries: The Buffalo area ranks 25th nationally in the number of employees in manufacturing, 21st in the value added by manufacture, and 21st in the value of shipments. The auto industry is the major manufacturer, providing 21.3% of all manufacturing employment. Machinery ranks second, supplying jobs for 20,400 or 18% of all manufacturing employees. General Motors is the largest employer, more than 20,000 work directly in automobile manufacturing. Other large companies are Dunlop Tire Corporation, Dupont, Fisher Price Toys, Ford Motor Company, etc. Health Care Industry: While the auto industry remains the single largest employer, health care is the fastest-growing and largest employment sector overall in Western New York. Chemical Industry: The chemical industry also provides a substantial number of all manufacturing jobs. Aircraft: Buffalo was one of the earliest centers of aircraft production in New York. Bell Aerospace Textron's plant is very active in meeting space age needs. Flour Milling: Despite an array of abandoned grain elevators, Buffalo still remains as a major flour milling center. Many of stable companies such as General Mills, International Mutifood, Peavey, Pillsbury have facilities.

3. Relationship with Japan

69 companies in the Buffalo area have a business relationship with Japan in 1994. There are six American companies acquired by Japanese companies in the area, and about 30-40 Japanese

business people staying in Buffalo for periods of 2-5 years. Including the number of students and permanent residents, a total of 320 Japanese people lived in the area in 1992 and 354 in 1993, according to the General Consulate of Japan in New York City. The Buffalo Japanese weekend school was established in 1990, and the Japanese Association of Buffalo was established in 1992.

Buffalo is actively involved in sister city programs with Kanazawa, Japan, and these two cities enjoy cultural exchange every year. Niagara Falls, one of the seven wonders in the world, has been the major tourist attraction in this area and many Japanese tourists visit there. The number of Japanese people has not increased drastically, but the participation in American society has been increasing and become more active every year. It is expected that the city will have a more positive and stronger partnership with Japan in the future.

III. State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo

1. Overview of the State University of New York at Buffalo

The State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY at Buffalo or UB) was organized as a school of medicine in 1846 and merged with the State University of New York (SUNY) system in 1962. Milliard Fillmore, the 13th president of the U.S., was the first chancellor. Today, the University at Buffalo is the largest of SUNY's 64 units and is the largest public university in the Northeast, with a total student population of about 26,000. In 1989, the University at Buffalo was elected a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU). The number of undergraduate students in 1993-94 was 17,087 and that of graduate and professional was 8,548. The percentage of the minority student was 17.4%. The mean combined SAT score for accepted freshmen in 1993 was 1051, while the national mean was 902 (Telephone Directory 1994 • 1995).

2. Foreign Language classes

The University at Buffalo, through its Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, World Languages Institute, and Department of Classics, offers various foreign language classes: Arabic, Chinese, Danish, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek,

Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. The following chart indicates the enrollments in the major foreign language programs in Fall 1994. Seven programs are listed according to their enrollments. Spanish, French, German, and Italian have graduate programs; Japanese, Chinese, and Russian have only undergraduate minor programs. The Japanese language program has the fifth largest enrollment in foreign language classes. However, the enrollment figures include language instruction classes as well as literature classes for the languages except Japanese. This means that Japanese will be ranked higher in terms of the enrollment of language instruction courses only.

	Undergraduate #	Graduate #	Total #
Spanish	829	115	944
French	382	48	430
German	247	34	281
Italian	202	8	210
Japanese	143	0	143
Chinese	99	0	99
Russian	75	0	75

3. Japanese language program

(1) past enrollment

Japanese classroom instruction began in the Spring semester of 1992. Previously, Japanese was taught through a supervised self-instructional program. In this program, students were expected to adhere to a daily schedule of tape practice, supplemented by two or three drill sessions a week conducted by a native-speaker. This program ended in the fall of 1994. The enrollment number of both classroom instruction and self-instruction was as follows: 156 in 1991, 241 in 1992, 208 in 1993, and 233 in 1994.

(2) student background

According to a survey conducted by the World Languages Institute at the end of the fall 1994 semester, the status of most students enrolled was undergraduate (92.5%), graduate (3%), and non-student (4.4%). The gender ratio of learners was male (61%) and female (39%). The percentage of students' nationality was U.S. (44.2%) and the rest (55.8%) were composed of foreign students. Asian-Americans composed 15.5% . Contained within the foreign student population, were students of Chinese background such as Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (33.6%); Koreans (13.7%), British (3%), 2 Vietnamese students, and one student each from Africa, South America, Haiti, and Indonesia. The languages spoken by these students at home were English (38%), Chinese (31.3%), Korean (14.2%), English and other languages in bilingual setting (13.4%) and small percentage of Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Spanish. The reasons why they are studying Japanese were (1) personal reasons (26.7%); (2) professional and career reasons (24.1%); (3) academic reasons (19.1%); (4) travel (14.6%); (5) requirement (8.3%) and others (6.9%). Interestingly, 40.8% of the students indicated that they would like to continue to take Japanese language classes for more than four semesters; 5.6% students for one more semester; 35.2% for 2 more semesters; 4.4% for 3 more semesters; and 14.4% for 4 more semesters. 77% students showed interest in participating in a study abroad program. 75.4% students have never enrolled in any other foreign language at a university level. Among those who had (24.6%), students took German (6.9%), Mandarin Chinese (3.8%), Korean, Spanish, French, Russian, Latin, Italian, English, and Ancient Greek. In high school level, 13.9% students didn't take any foreign languages. The most popular language studied was Spanish (36.8%), followed by French (21.5%), German (9.7%), Latin (5.5%), Japanese (4.2%), and Italian and Chinese (2.8%).

The general picture of students who are studying Japanese at the University at Buffalo is undergraduate students with various ethnic backgrounds (especially Asians) who are interested in Japanese mainly because they have personal interests and professional reasons. For most

students, Japanese is the first foreign language they took at the university level and many students wish to continue to learn Japanese beyond their language requirement.

IV. Research Methodology

1. SUBJECT

We surveyed two populations: university students and local companies. (1) A total of 21 students who are enrolled in the second and third year Japanese courses in Spring 1995 at UB were asked to fill out the questionnaire. (2) The questionnaire was mailed to a total of 69 local companies in Buffalo vicinity which have a business relationship with Japan. The business categories of the companies are 22 industrial products (31.9%); 10 medical/ dental products and services (14.5%); 8 legal service (11.6%); 6 commercial/ food products (8.7%); 6 financial, banking, debt collection, factoring services (8.7%); 6 transportation, real estate, travel, insurance services (8.7%); 4 accounting (5.8%); 1 engineering, language capabilities, and export/import. Among them 16 companies replied, making the rate of reply 24%.

2. MEASURES

This survey focused on the expectations and goals of the students for the Business Japanese program and on the prospective employers in the local area. Therefore, two sets of questionnaires were designed and administered; one for the students and the other for the companies. The contents of the questionnaire were mostly identical except some items. (Appendix 1). The questionnaire items are all multiple-choice except for a couple of open-ended questions to elicit comments. The three main research questions are as follows:

(1) Do companies in the Buffalo area consider the study of Japanese language and culture important for their business? If so, in what way?

(2) Do students at the University at Buffalo consider the study of Japanese language and culture important for their business career? If so, in what way?

(3) Are there any differences between the expectations of students and the actual demand of business communities?

3. ANALYSIS

Assisted by the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) program, descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were obtained to understand the total pattern of each answer. The students' responses were compared to those of the prospective employers to understand the differences and the similarities of the two groups' answers.

4. RESULT

The results of the questionnaires addressed to the local companies and the students at the University at Buffalo were analyzed separately, and then compared and contrasted. The Appendix II summarizes the results of the survey. The similarities and differences of the results were discussed.

1. Company Result

(1) Background of the companies who responded

The questionnaires from Q1 to Q5 inquire about the background of the companies. 14 American and 2 Japanese personnel responded to the questionnaires. 5 respondents belong to Japanese-owned companies (31.3%), 5 to American-owned (31.3%), and 6 to other nationalities such as French, Swiss, Hong Kong, British, Canadian, German (37.5%). 56.5% respondents deal with industrial products, which reflects the characteristics of the Buffalo community. Most of the companies which responded (68.5%) were mid-sized (50 - 300 employees). 6 companies (37.5%) hire American employees who have Japanese language background, while 10 companies haven't hired anyone with this background.

(2) The need and importance of Japanese language and cultural knowledge in the local companies

The questions 7 and 8 were designed to find out in what way the local companies see Japanese language skill and cultural knowledge as advantageous. Japanese language skills were regarded as advantageous in terms of communication (50%), success on contracts (50%),

employment (18.3%), and promotion (18.3%). The knowledge of Japanese business culture was regarded as advantageous in terms of communication (56.3%), success on business contracts (37.5%), promotion (18.8%), and employment (18.8%). Thus, the Japanese language and cultural skills were viewed as advantageous in the areas of communication and success vis-a-vis business contracts, while they were not advantageous for employment and promotion.

The questions 9 and 10 inquired about the language skills which the local companies expect their employees to possess, and the cultural skills which they expect their employees to have. The local companies indicated that it is important to know the following language skills: making a business contract (37.5%), carrying out a business phone call (37.5%), and reading and writing business letter (37.5%). Japanese is also used when making a presentation, conducting simple interpretation, and writing and understanding reports.

The local companies expect their employees to know the following business culture: greeting (43.8%), business card exchange (37.5%), how to write a business letter (37.5%) and gift exchange (31.3%). The Japanese business protocols such as ringi system, nemawashi, aizuchi, hanko were not regarded as significant knowledge to have. This result may be due to the fact that the personnel who responded to this questionnaire might have not been familiar with this Japanese terminology. Seven companies (43.8%) indicated that it is very important to understand Japanese business culture in general. Twelve companies (75.0%) said that it is necessary to recognize the cultural differences and follow the appropriate Japanese business culture and customs (protocol and etiquette) when they deal with Japanese customers.

Question 12 asked about company interest in taking Japanese language and culture courses at the University at Buffalo. Those who responded yes (31.2%) and maybe (25.0%) were more than 50%, which may suggest that there is some interest in learning the language and culture. The local companies (more than 50%) stated that a person with Japanese language and culture background would be valuable and the need to learn Business Japanese would increase. The local companies hire or plan to hire people with an advanced level of spoken Japanese and intermediate level of reading and writing skills. The comments about the Business Japanese program made by

the local companies were varied: the need for business Japanese, the importance of cultural learning over language learning, etc. (see Appendix II).

2. Student Result

(1) Background of students who responded

In Q 2, students indicated that they would like to work in the following industries: export and import trading company (33.3%), financial services (23.8%), education (19.0%). Other industries in which students are interested were engineering, marketing, commercial food products, legal, and consulting services. Thus, students at the University at Buffalo are seeking employment in the service sector.

(2) The need and importance of Japanese language and cultural knowledge for the students

Questions 3 and 4 were designed to find out what aspects of Japanese language skills and cultural skills were regarded as advantageous by the students. Japanese language skills were viewed as advantageous in terms of communication (85.7%), employment (71.4%), success for contracts (66.7%), and promotion (57.1%). The knowledge of Japanese business culture was regarded as advantageous in terms of communication (81.0%), employment (81.0%), success on business contracts (61.9%), and promotion (57.1%). Thus, the students viewed Japanese language skills and cultural knowledge as advantageous in all aspects of business careers.

The questions 5 and 6 relate to the students what kinds of language activities students would perform at the workplace, and what sorts of culture and customs they should know to do business. Students indicated that it is important to know how to write a business letter (85.7%), exchange a business card (81.0%), how to greet (76.2%), make a business phone call (76.2%), and socialize at formal and informal settings (66.7%). The students expected to use Japanese when making a presentation, conducting simple interpretation, and writing and understanding reports. The students regarded Japanese business protocols such as ringi system and nemawashi as important knowledge.

Many students believe that it is very important to understand Japanese business culture in general, recognize cultural differences, and follow the appropriate Japanese business culture and customs (protocol and etiquette) when they deal with Japanese customers. Many students commented on the importance of learning Japanese language and culture. Some students expressed an interest in learning Japanese culture, society, and historical development to understand current Japanese business practice, and Japanese companies' expectations towards foreign employees (see Appendix II).

3. Comparison of Results between Company and Student

In this section, we would like to describe the similarities and differences, comparing the results of the same questions addressed to UB students and local companies. The eight charts in the Appendix II helps to understand the differences in the expectations and goals of the two subjects.

Q7/ Q3: In which of the following areas can Japanese language skills be advantageous? Comparison: Students regarded language skills as very important for communication, success on contracts, employment, and promotion, while local companies regarded language skills as advantageous only in communication and success for contracts.

Q8/ Q4: In which of the following areas are the knowledge of Japanese business culture and customs advantageous? Comparison: Students regarded all cultural skills very important, while companies regarded cultural skills as advantageous only in communication and success for contracts. While many students thought that learning Japanese is advantageous for the future employment, local companies didn't agree with the students' expectations.

Q9/ Q5: Which business activity do you expect your American employees to be able to handle in Japanese ? Comparison: Students think that it is difficult to conduct library research and make a

business contract in Japanese. Overall, students showed a strong desire to utilize Japanese language skills in the work place. On the other hand, the local companies were very selective in terms of the usage of Japanese. The employers expect students to use Japanese in the following areas: making a business contract, writing and reading a business letter, and telephone conversations. The students showed less confidence in making business contracts, while the local companies expected students to perform well in that area.

Q6/ Q10: Which of the following aspects of Japanese business culture and customs do you expect your American employees to know? Comparison: Students valued all cultural elements as important. On the other hand, the local companies were more selective; they viewed greeting, business card exchange, and business letter writing as important elements.

V. Discussion

The following four findings were identified in this survey.

Finding 1: There were the great gaps in expectations between local companies and UB students regarding the utilization of Japanese language skills and cultural knowledge. The possible explanations for this finding are discussed from the viewpoints of students and local companies. (1) Students. The UB students are not informed enough about realities of the business world and have little to no experience working in such a setting. Therefore, the students do not have a clear picture of the utilization of the Japanese language and cultural knowledge. On the other hand, it could be said that the UB students have highly positive attitudes towards their future career and recognize the importance of foreign language skills in international business settings. Lastly, despite the lack of real work experience, students are aware that a knowledge of Japanese business practices is important. As a consequence, students paid closer attention to the terminology and recognized their importance. (2) Local Companies. Many local companies in the Buffalo area have little opportunity to use the Japanese language at their work places despite their business relations with Japan. When the opportunities exist, a limited number of people are assigned to do

the work. Due to the lack of close contact with Japanese companies and people, the personnel who responded to this survey may not have a clear idea about their specific needs, although they recognize the importance of Japanese language skills and cultural knowledge. For example, they agreed with the statement that their American employees need to follow appropriate Japanese business culture and customs when they deal with Japanese customers (Q11). However, specific Japanese practices and customs such as "ringi system" and "nemawashi" were not viewed as important (Q10). It could be assumed that the personnel in the local companies did not know these Japanese terminology or/and were not familiar with Japanese business protocol and etiquette. Some local companies who closely deal with Japan seem to have clear idea about the utilization the Japanese language and cultural knowledge. They would like to hire a person with a strong background in Japanese language and culture who would play a role in communicating with their customers or business partners in Japan through business letter and fax, and sometime face-to-face business meetings.

Finding 2: Japanese language and cultural skills were viewed as advantageous in the areas of communication and success on business contract, while they weren't advantageous for employment and promotion. The importance of the Japanese culture and language is viewed as secondary among employees in local companies. This is due to the fact that many local companies which responded to this questionnaire do not have close contact with Japanese companies. When they need to contact people from Japanese companies, they tend to hire an interpreter or translator rather have their employees handle those situations. Thus, if the students at UB seek an employment in Buffalo, they primarily have to have the specialized skills and knowledge in their fields: mere Japanese language skills will not ensure employment and promotion.

Finding 3: The results of the research indicated some specific knowledge and skills which are more likely to be utilized in business activities among local companies and in which students are more likely to be interested: (1) general information on Japan; (2) specific information on Japanese

business practices; (3) interpersonal and intercultural communication; and (4) specific Japanese language skills.

(1) Students showed an interest in learning Japanese geography, history, economic development, management style to have a background knowledge of Japan. It is very important to understand the development of Japanese society which enabled Japan to achieve such success in business. To meet this request, videos and additional readings on the above topics will be introduced in class and guest speakers will be invited to conduct lectures.

(2) After acquiring some background knowledge about Japan, the next step is to understand the Japanese style of doing business: company structure, employment / promotion system, wage system, distribution system, etc. It is necessary to gain knowledge on Japanese business practices because mere language skills and knowledge cannot help learners to become successful business people.

(3) The next step is to learn how to behave appropriately in business settings in America and Japan. It is important to identify problems on the day-to-day interaction between Japanese and non-Japanese business people, and to create some methods to avoid conflict and ensure smooth interaction between them. An effective approach could be a "problem-solving" activity which creates various problematic situations and deal with how Japanese and non-Japanese cope with those problems. The business manner and etiquette should be introduced.

(4) The local companies which responded to the survey identified the important language and culture skills and knowledge: make a business contract, phone conversation, business presentation, read/write letter, greeting, card exchange, & gift exchange. In class, teachers need to be aware of those skills which prospective employees should have. Business vocabulary and expressions should also be introduced in class.

Finding 4: Another major finding of this research is a complex picture of the language needs of local companies in Buffalo. Generally speaking, companies which have relations with Japan in the U.S can be categorized into the following three types: (1) U.S. companies / multinational

CHART 1 : NEEDS OF LOCAL COMPANIES IN BUFFALO

COMPANY	COMMUNICATION PATTERN & LANGUAGE USED	REALITY & NEEDS	FOCUS OF LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION
(1) U.S. companies / Multi-national companies which have business relations with Japan	**U.S.** — **Japan** white-collar workers — English / Japanese — white-collar workers specialist — English — specialist Blue-collar workers — English — Blue-collar workers	=>business knowledge and work experience (primary) + Japanese language and culture knowedge and skills (secondary) => Expect Japanese to speak English, or hire an interpreter =>	For white-collar workers =>• specific language skills used in Business setting • culture in office setting For engeneer & blue-collar workers =>• general Japanese culture • culture in factory setting
(2) U.S. companies Acquired by Japanese (more contact with Japanese)	white-collar workers — English / Japanese — white-collar workers specialist — English — specialist Blue-collar workers — English — Blue-collar workers	=>Japanese language and cultural skills are viewed as very important => Expect Japanese to speak English, hire an interpreter OR => looking for a person who has technical background + excellent knowledge & skills of Japanese culture & language (imperfect English/Japanese is very dangerous in factory-setting)	For white-collar workers =>• specific language skills used in Business setting • culture in office and factory setting For engeneers =>• specific language skills used in technical setting + culture in factory setting For blue-collar workers =>• general Japanese culture • culture in factory setting • some Japanese language skills
(3) Japanese companies which have extended their factory / business to the U.S.	could be similar to the pattern (2)		

companies which have business relations with Japan; (2) U.S. companies acquired by Japanese which have closer contact with Japan than companies in category (1); and (3) Japanese companies which have expanded their factories/business to the U.S. The companies in the Buffalo area fall into categories (1) & (2). Various factors influence the choice of language used between Japanese and American workers and the degree of the needs for Japanese language skills and culture knowledge. The Chart 1 summarizes the communication pattern and language used, their actual needs of Japanese language skills and cultural knowledge which should be recognized in the above (1) and (2) settings. The last column indicates the focus of instruction for such settings. For those local companies in Buffalo which have some business relations with Japan (1), business communication and negotiation take place between American and Japanese white collar workers. In such a setting, Japanese language skills are viewed as secondary, but beneficial to have in terms of communicating/ negotiating with Japanese customers and succeeding in business contracts. Only language and culture skills are not viewed as an important factor in promotion and employment. In this sense, Japanese language skills and cultural knowledge can be used as advantageous skills if employees already have general business knowledge and work experience. Communication between American and Japanese engineers, American white-collar workers and Japanese engineers and vice-versa, American blue-collar workers and Japanese engineers and white-collar workers and vice-versa is carried out in English. Such communication is less likely to occur and when it takes place, the American side expects the Japanese to communicate in English. When they negotiate important matters, they use an interpreter.

For those companies acquired by Japanese companies, Japanese language and culture skills are not viewed as a primary factor, but a very important factor because they have more frequent contact with Japanese people and because good language and communication skills are required in the workplace every day. The survey indicated that such companies are looking for someone who possesses an advanced level of spoken skills and intermediate reading and writing skills. In the Buffalo areas, those companies which have relations with Japan are mainly industrial products companies. The majority of Japanese people working for those companies are Japanese engineers

and technicians who are usually unable to communicate with American workers in fluent English. Therefore, as Mr. Peter Fujita, the president of Dunlop corporation, indicated, "We need someone who is an excellent speaker of both English and Japanese because it is dangerous to converse with each other in imperfect language especially when they are working on the floor using machinery. We hire interpreters to work with Japanese technicians (Fujita, 1995)." These findings suggest that we may focus on the language use and communication patterns which occur in blue-collar work settings, as well as those of white-collar work settings. It seems very important for American factory workers to be familiar with Japanese business customs and language because they are the ones who work directly with Japanese technicians.

IV. Conclusion and Implications

Many students taking Japanese courses express their desire to acquire language skills that they will be able to use in the business world after graduation. By the same token, Japanese cultural knowledge and skills are very important when we teach a business Japanese class. The findings of this survey suggest the big gaps in the expectations between the local companies and students. To solve this problem, it is important to provide students with information about the realistic needs of companies. Specific Japanese language skills and cultural knowledge which are more likely to be utilized in business activities should be introduced effectively in class. At the same time, it is important for local companies to learn more about Japanese language and culture in order to establish good business relationships with Japanese co-workers as well as companies in Japan.

Limitations

This research has a number of limitations which should be noted. First, the research was done only for local companies and most responses came from the companies which deal with industrial products because of Buffalo's unique geographic and economic profile. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be directly applied to other locations nor to other fields of business.

We are convinced that further research on needs assessment is necessary in order to find out the needs of such industries as export and import, and financial industries in which many UB students are interested. Secondly, the return rate of the survey was low (24%) and the data pool was relatively small (21 students and 16 companies). It is worth conducting further research with larger subjects to confirm the findings of this study. Thirdly, due to the limited number of subjects, we couldn't compare the results in terms of the size of companies, nationality of the companies (American companies versus Japanese-owned companies), and the status of respondents (executives, managers, engineers, etc.).

Further areas of research

It is important to capture the realistic needs of business companies and students in order to develop a course to meet their expectations. The following areas of research might be necessary to design an effective syllabus for business Japanese. (1) It is necessary to ascertain the needs of service industries such as import and export business and finance. (2) The comparison and contrast of the results of the needs assessment in various industries will reveal the specific needs of various industries and identify the command skills needed for success in any type of business. (3) It is also important to find out the similar and different needs for Japanese-owned companies and American companies acquired by Japanese companies by comparing and contrasting the results of the needs assessment of those companies. (4) It would be interesting to examine the differences in the perception of the importance of Japanese language and culture skills before and after taking a class.

Implication

This survey provides some insights into developing the Business Japanese program. Since the students and the employers have different expectations and needs vis-a-vis learning business Japanese, it is reasonable to establish two tracks of the business Japanese program. The primary goals of these two programs are (1) to assist the participants in mastering grammar and vocabulary

essential for normal business activities; and (2) to provide a wealth of background information about Japanese companies, local business protocol, customs, etc. to enable the participants to understand and operate with confidence in a new business environment. In class, special attention should be paid to design scenarios of various office activities in a quasi real-world setting. Track I is an intensive seminar-style program designed for working people who have little or no background in Japanese culture and language. Track II is for students who have completed at least two years of Japanese language studies in a classroom format (see Appendix III).

Since many successful MBA programs adapt internship training programs in the target country and the program attracts many students, we might explore the possibilities of having an internship program. As Suarez (1993) points out, students who plan to work in an international business setting after graduation should have the experience of living and working in a foreign country to develop their special skills that will benefit their employer. However, we have to be cautious about such an internship program because, as Suarez indicates (1993), the number of institutions and companies which accept students as trainees are limited, and because it is not easy to recruit foreign employers who accept and train the students.

Finally, we recognize the necessity of cautious follow-up in improving the curriculum's authenticity and in monitoring students' progress in learning and satisfaction to make appropriate curricular improvements. Through these efforts, we hope to ensure the success of a Business Japanese program which will meet the needs of both the local private sector and students at the University at Buffalo.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE (for students)

Directions: Please answer each of the following questions by circling the appropriate number(1, 2, 3, etc.).

1. Are you currently working ?

    1) yes
    2) no

2. In which area of business are you working or you plan to work in the future?

    1) Industrial Products
    2) Commercial/Food Products
    3) Medical Products & Services
    4) Accounting
    5) Engineering, Testing, Research & Development
    6) Education
    7) Export/Import, trading Company, Sales Office
    8) Financial, Banking, Debt Collection, Factoring
    9) Legal
    10) Marketing, Telecommunications, Utilities
    11) Transportation, Real Estate, Travel, Insurance
    12) Translation Services
    13) Cosulting (specify:)
    14) Other (specify:)

3. In which of the following do you think Japanese language skills can be advantageous? You may circle more than one answer.

    1) employment
    2) promotion
    3) better communication
    4) success on business contract with customers
    5) other (specify:)

4. In which of the following do you think the knowledge of Japanese business culture and customs can be advantageous? You may circle more than one answer.

    1) employment
    2) promotion
    3) better communication
    4) success on business contract with customers
    5) other (specify:)

5. In which of the following business activities you plan to engage when you use Japanese language? You my circle more than one answer.

1) ask more complicated questions
2) phone conversation
3) communicate at a bank, post office, restaurant, hospital, or other public service offices
4) understand an advertisement
5) understand weather reports
6) understand an announcement in train, airplane, or station
7) use Keigo (honorific/humble forms)
8) do a presention in business meeting or seminar
9) write reports
10) understand reports or presentations
11) understand a lecture of general topic
12) read newspapers and magazines
13) read a business letter
14) write a business letter
15) read books of general topic
16) research in library
17) make a contract
18) simple interpretation/translation
19) understand Japanese business culture/customs
20) understand and follow Japanese business culture/customs
21) other (specify:)

6. Which of the following aspects of Japanese business culture and customs do you think it is important to know? You may circle more than one answer.

1) greetings
2) gift exchange
3) business cards exchange
4) ringi-system(decision-making process)
5) nemawashi(bottom-up decision-making process)
6) how to make business telephone calls
7) how to write business letters
8) aizuchi(nodding)
9) hanko "Stamps"
10) business socialization (i.e., entertaining clients)
11) other (specify:)

7. Are you interested in a Business Japanese course? If you circle number 1 (yes), please write your motivation to take and your goal/expectation from the course in the space below.

1) yes
2) no
3) may be
4) don't know

8. Do you think the importance of hiring American college graduates with a background in Japanese will increase in the future in United States? Why do you think so? Please write your opinion below.

9. If you have any comments or suggestions about a Business Japanese course, please write them below.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COORPORATION.

UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO
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January 31, 1995

Dear Sir / Madam:

We would like to announce the offering of a course in Business Japanese language and Culture in Fall 1995 at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In preparation for this course, we are conducting a survey to assess the need and interest for such a course from the local business community.

Of particular importance to the successful launching of this course is the enclosed survey which is sent to local businesses dealing with Japan. It aims at gathering information about employment opportunities for college graduates who possess necessary skills in Japanese language and culture in order to function in global markets.

We would very much appreciate you taking time off your busy schedule to answer the questions in this survey. Please return the enclosed questionnaire in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided to you, at your convenience. However, we would appreciate receiving your response by February 15.

Your time and cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely Yours,

Ms. Kazue Masuyama
Japanese Language Program Coordinator

Dr. Setsue Shibata
Instructor

QUESTIONNAIRE (for the companies)

Directions: Please answer each of the following questions by circling the appropriate number(1, 2, 3, etc.).
Please keep in mind the following points in answering the questions.

1. We are interested in your company/office in Buffalo and its suburbs only.

2. If you do not feel comfortable with some of the questions, please do not answer them.

Questions:

1. What is your nationality?

   1) Japanese
   2) American

2. Is your parent company

   1) Japanese owned
   2) American owned
   3) other (specify:)

3. What type of business does your company do?

   1) Industrial Products
   2) Commercial/Food Products
   3) Medical Products & Services
   4) Accounting
   5) Engineering, Research & Development
   6) Education
   7) Export/Import, Trading Company, Sales Office
   8) Financial, Banking, Debt Collection, Factoring
   9) Legal
   10) Marketing, Telecommunications, Utilities
   11) Transportation, Real Estate, Travel, Insurance
   12) Translation Services
   13) Consulting (specify:)
   14) Other (specify:)

4. How many employees does your company have (Buffalo office only)?

   1) 1-49
   2) 50-150
   3) 151-300
   4) 301-500
   5) 501-1000

6) more than 1000

5. Does your company hire American employees who have Japanese language background?

   1) Yes (please go to question 6)
   2) No (please go to question 7 and answer the rest of the questions based on your opinion)

6. How many of your American employees speak Japanese or know about Japanese Business culture?
   Please write the approximate number here _____

7. In your company, in which of the following areas can Japanese language skills be advantageous? You may circle more than one answer.

   1) employment
   2) promotion
   3) better communication
   4) success on business contract
   5) other (specify:)

8. In your company, in which of the following areas are Japanese business culture and customs advantageous in your company? You may circle more than one answer.

   1) employment
   2) promotion
   3) better communication
   4) success on business contract
   5) other (specify:)

9. Which business activity do you expect your American employees be able to handle in Japanese? You may circle more than one answer.

   1) ask more complicated questions
   2) phone conversation
   3) communicate at a bank, post office, restaurant, hospital, or other public service offices
   4) understand an advertisement
   5) understand weather reports
   6) understand an announcement in train, airplane, or station
   7) use Keigo (honorific/humble forms)
   8) do presentation in business meeting or seminar
   9) write reports
   10) understand reports or presentations
   11) understand commands and requests
   12) read newspapers and magazines
   13) read a business letter
   14) write a business letter

15) read books of general topics
16) research in library
17) make a business contract
18) simple interpretation/translation
19) understand Japanese business culture
20) understand and follow Japanese business culture
21) other (specify:)

10. Which of the following aspects of Japanese business culture and customs do you expect your American employees know?

1) greetings
2) gift exchange
3) business cards exchange
4) ringi-system(decision-making process)
5) nemawashi(bottom-up decision-making process)
6) how to make business telephone calls
7) how to write business letters
8) aizuchi(nodding)
9) hanko "Stamps"
10) business socialization (i.e., entertaining clients)
11) other (specify:)

11. Do you believe that your American employees need to follow the appropriate Japanese business couture and customs (protocol and etiquette) when they deal with Japanese customers?

1) yes
2) not necessary
3) depend on the situation(specify:)
4) don't know

12. Is your company interested in a course at SUNY at Buffalo which would teach your American employees Japanese language and culture skills?

1) yes--language-oriented class
2) yes--culture-oriented class
3) yes--language and culture
4) no
5) maybe
6) don't know

13. Is your company interested in an intensive course rather than a semester-based course at SUNY at Buffalo?

1) yes
2) no
3) maybe
4) don't know

14. Does your company hire or plan to hire in the future prospective employee who are bilingual in English and Japanese? If the answer is 1 (yes), how much Japanese proficiency do you expect of them? Please circle the appropriate level in the parenthesis for each area.

    1) yes
        a. Speaking: (Elementary/Intermediate/Advanced)
        b. Listening: (Elementary/Intermediate/Advanced)
        c. Reading: (Elementary/Intermediate/Advanced)
        d. Writing: (Elementary/Intermediate/Advanced)

    2) no
    3) don't know

15. Do you believe that the importance of hiring Americans with a background in Japanese and Japanese business culture and customs will increase in the future in your company? Please write reasons why you think so in the space below.

    1) yes
    2) maybe
    3) no
    4) don't know

16. If you have any comments or suggestions about Business course, please write them below.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COORPORATION.

APPENDIX II

Appendix II: Survey Results

COMPANY RESULT

1. THE QUESTIONS INQUIRE ABOUT THE BACKGROUND OF THE LOCAL COMPANIES AND STUDENTS

Q1: What is your nationality?

Japanese	2	12.5%
American	14	87.5%

Q2: Is your parent company

Japanese owned	5	31.3%
American owned	5	31.3%
other	6	37.5%

Q3: What type of business does your company do?

Industrial products	9	56.3%
commercial/Food Products	1	6.3%
Medical Products & Services	1	6.3%
Engineering, R & D	1	6.3%
Financial	1	6.3%
Legal	1	6.3%
Transportation Services	1	6.3%
Other	1	6.3%

Q4: How many employees does your company have (Buffalo office only)?

1-49	2	12.5%
50-150	7	43.5%
151-300	4	25.0%
501-1000	3	18.8%

Q5: Does your company hire American employees who have Japanese language background?

Yes	6	37.5%
No	10	62.5%

STUDENT RESULT

Q1. Are you currently working?

Yes	10	47.6%
No	11	52.4%

Q2. In which area of business are you working or you plan to work in the future?

Export / Import, trading, sale	7	33.3%
Financial & Banking	5	23.8%
Education	4	19.0%
Engineering	3	14.3%
Marketing	2	9.5%
Commercial Food Products	1	4.8%
Legal	1	4.8%
Consulting Service	1	4.8%
Other	1	4.8%

2. THE NEEDS AND IMPORTANCE OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE SKILLS AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

(Q7-Q 10 in the local companies & Q3-Q6 in the student survey are identical.)

Q7: In your company, in which of the following areas can Japanese language skills be advantageous?
You may circle more than one answer.

	Y/N	
1. communication	8/8	50%
2. success on business contract	8/8	50%
3. advantage for employment	3/13	18.8%
4. promotion	3/13	18.8%
5. Others	5/11	31.8%
	(sale, business success)	

Q3: In which of the following do you think Japanese language skills can be advantageous? You may circle more than one answer.

	Y/N	
1. communication	18/3	85.7%
2. advantage for employment	15/6	71.4%
3. success on business contract	14/7	66.7%
4. promotion	12/9	57.1%
5. others	2/19	9.5%

Q8: In your company, in which of the following areas are Japanese business culture and customs advantageous in your company? You may circle more than one answer.

	Y/N	
1. communication	9/7	56.3%
2. success on business contract	6/10	37.5%
3. promotion	4/12	25.0%
4. advantage for employment	3/13	18.8%
5. others	3/13	18.8%
	(Client relations, sale)	

Q4: In which of the following do you think the knowledge of Japanese business culture and customs can be advantageous? You may circle more than one answer.

	Y/N	
1. communication	17/4	81.0%
2. employment	17/4	81.0%
3. success on business contract	13/8	61.9%
4. promotion	12/9	57.1%
5. others	1/20	4.8%

Q9: Which business activity do you expect your American employees be able to handle in Japanese. You may circle more than one answer.

	Y/N	
1. make a business contract	6/10	37.5% (13.9%)
1. phone conversation	6/10	37.5% (13.9%)
1. read business letter	6/10	37.5% (13.9%)
1. write business letter	6/10	37.5% (13.9%)

Q5: In which of the following business activities you plan to engage when you use Japanese language? You many circle more than one answer.

	Y/N	
1. understanding reports	18/3	85.7% (7.6%)
1. read newspapers/magazines *	18/3	85.7% (7.6%)
1. read business letter	18/3	85.7% (7.6%)
2. simple interpretation	17/4	81.0% (7.2%)

2. presentation in meeting/ seminar	4/12	25.0% (9.3%)	3. write a business letter	15/6	71.4% (6.6%)
2. simple interpretation	4/12	25.0% (9.3%)	3. phone conversation	15/6	71.4% (6.6%)
3. write reports	3/13	18.8% (7.0%)	4. understand lecture *	14/7	66.7% (5.9%)
3. understanding requests	3/13	18.8% (7.0%)	4. read books of general topics *	14/7	66.7% (5.9%)
3. understanding reports	3/13	18.8% (7.0%)	4. understanding an advertisement *	14/7	66.7% (5.9%)
4. use of keigo	1/15	6.3% (2.3%)	5. ask more compli. questions *	13/8	61.9% (5.5%)
4. others	1/15	6.3% (2.3%)	5. communicate at pub. services *	13/8	61.9% (5.5%)
			6. understanding an announcement *	12/9	57.1% (5.1%)
			7. use of keigo	10/11	47.6% (4.2%)
			7. understanding weather reports *	10/11	47.6% (4.2%)
			7. write a report	10/11	47.6% (4.2%)
			8. make a business contract	9/12	42.9% (3.8%)
			8. presentation in meeting/ seminar	9/12	42.9% (3.8%)
			9. research in library *	7/14	33.3% (3.0%)
Total		269.0% (100%)			1123.8% (100%)

Notes: * marks in the students' response indicate that those items are not marked at all by the local companies.

Q10: Which of the following aspects of Japanese business culture and customs do you expect your American employees know? You may circle more than one answer.

	Y/N	
1. greeting	7/9	43.8% (15.9%)
2. bus. card exchange	6/10	37.5% (13.6%)
2. how to write a bus. letter	6/10	37.5% (13.6%)
3. gift exchange	5/11	31.3% (13.6%)
4. phone conversation	4/12	25.0% (9.1%)
5. ringi system	3/13	18.8% (6.8%)
5. nemawashi	3/13	18.8% (6.8%)
5. aizuchi	3/13	18.8% (6.8%)
6. hanko	2/14	12.5% (4.5%)

Q6: Which of the following aspects of Japanese business culture and customs do you think it is important to know? You may circle more than one answer.

	Y/N	
1. how to write a bus. letter	18/3	85.7% (13.2%)
2. bus. cards exchange	17/4	81.0% (11.8%)
3. greetings	16/5	76.2% (11.8%)
3. phone calls	16/5	76.2% (11.8%)
4. socialization	14/7	66.7% (10.3%)
5. ringi system	13/8	61.9% (9.6%)
5. nemawashi	13/8	61.9% (9.6%)
6. gift exchange	11/10	52.4% (8.1%)
7. aizuchi	10/11	47.6% (7.3%)
8. hanko	8/13	38.1% (5.9%)

3. THE QUESTIONS ADDRESSED ONLY TO THE LOCAL COMPANIES (Q11-Q15)

Q11: Do you believe that your American employees need to follow the appropriate Japanese business culture and customs (protocol and etiquette) when they deal with Japanese customers?

Yes	12	75.0%	Not necessary	3	18.8%

Q12: Is your company interested in a course at SUNY at Buffalo which would teach your American employees Japanese language and culture skills?

Yes	5	31.2%	maybe	4	25.0%
No	4	25.0%	don't know	3	18.8%

Q14: Does your company hire or plan to hire in the future prospective employee who are bilingual in English and Japanese? If the answer is 1 (yes), how much Japanese proficiency do you expect of them? Please circle the appropriate level in the parenthesis for each area.

Yes	9	56.3%
No	7	43.8%

Y/N

Listening skills: elementary (0/2), intermediate (1/2), advanced (1/2)
Speaking skills: elementary (0/2), intermediate (1/2), advanced (1/2)
Reading skills: elementary (0/2), intermediate (1/2), advanced (1/2)
Writing skills: elementary (0/2), intermediate (1/2), advanced (1/2) Notes: very subjective and limited response

Q15: Do you believe that the importance of hiring Americans with a background in Japanese and Japanese business culture and customs will increase in the future in your company?

Yes	6	37.5%	maybe	4	25.0%
No	2	12.5%	don't know	4	25.0%

Companies Comments:

- " It is very beneficial for our employees to understand how Japanese business is conducted. It will help our employees understand how decisions are made and the impact of those decision."

- "We have Japanese employees living in Japan to assist us with all of these functions"

- "We are a division of a multi national corporation with a Japanese parent company. There is currently little contact on communications with any of Japanese management and this facility. Only one or two individuals will likely ever have contact with Japanese management on customers and engineers."

- "The background in customs and etiquette is more important than the language."

4. THE QUESTIONS ADDRESSED ONLY TO THE STUDENTS (Q7-Q9)

Q7: Are you interested in a Business Japanese course? If you circle number 1(yes), please write you motivation to take and your goal /expectation form the course in the space below.

- "to become an international business person"
- "to know Japanese business methods"
- "business vocabulary, customs in business, do's and don'ts"
- "know how to write business letters, reports and read magazines"

Q8: Do you think the importance of hiring American college graduate with a background in Japanese will increase in the future in the United States? why do you think so? Please write you opinion below.

+ (positive comments)
- "There would be a huge increase in trade between America, so Japanese language background is very important."
- "more an more people are overcoming their foreign prejudice and are moving forward a more united world society."
- "I hope so. It is ignorant to speak only one language in today's global society."
- "Because it will strengthen US's economy"
- "I think its important because this further extends the concept of multiculturalism in the country which further promotes an understanding of the two cultures."
- "Japan and the US are so intertwined so that it is important."
- "As the world becomes increasingly interdependent communication between countries will increase. The demand for people who can facilitate that communication in whatever setting (educational, business, etc.) will increase rapidly, creating a demand for people with foreign language and culture skills."
- "It seems that more and more American corporations which deal with Japanese companies will see the need for having people in their employee who have a good understanding of Japanese business customs. Such understanding begins with a study of Japanese language."
- "transfer of technology between nations."
- "They can exchange the Japanese way of management with the American which brings improvement."
- "I am a strong believer in internationalism, and see any cultural appreciation of any sort vital to the prospective of a global community. In as much as business/ language skills, these are manifestations of such cultures. Japan is the most important country in the world."

- "Because America's most important business partners are the pacific rim countries."
- "Japan is our largest Asian trading partner and we now have an interdependent economic relationship with Japan."

+/-
- "It all depends on the Japans economy and government. Japanese government and companies have been reluctant to hire foreigners. Unless their attitude changes I don't see many chances for foreign people working in Japan."

- "May or may not. it depends on how much growth there is in relations between American and Japanese companies."

- (negative)
- "Not really"

Q9: If you have any comments or suggestions about a Business Japanese course, please write them below.

- "information on business culture and society"
- "some scenario about Japanese society and the model conversation in the drill books"
- "Japanese practices in business and the language they use, not on the language they have borrowed from English."
- "conversational Japanese"
- "Japanese 'boot camps' where we can receive all of the instruction which a new employee in a Japanese company could get. Just don't make us sing any company songs though, please."
- "Explain how traditional culture influence the role of the modern Japanese businessman."
- "information on general office hierarchy"
- "cultural gaps what a foreigner can expect in a Japanese environment (i.e. promotions, expectations, etc.) Business etiquette."
- "Some time should be spend explaining the historical background and philosophy which has created the Japanese business system and mind. Attitudes toward foreigners should be studied, too."

APPENDIX III

Appendix III : Goals/ Objectives and Content of Business Japanese Program at the University at Buffalo

Track I. (Workshop)

Objectives:
(1) To assist the participants in mastering fundamentals of grammar and vocabulary essential for normal business activities
(2) To provide a wealth of background information about Japanese companies, local business protocol, customs, etc. to enable the participants to understand and operate with confidence in a new business environment

Content:
1. Japanese / American Cross Cultural Business Negotiations
put emphasis on learning how Japanese business conversations develop, not just on learning business vocabulary and expressions.
2. Gift Exchange Practice
3. Decision Making Process of Japanese Companies
4. Socialization
5. General Information on Japan
(economic development, Japanese management system, etc.)

Track II. (Classroom instruction)

Objectives:
(1) To assist the participants in mastering intermediate/advanced level of grammar and vocabulary essential for normal business activities

(2) To provide a wealth of background information about Japanese companies, local business protocol, customs, etc. to enable the participants to understand and operate with confidence in a new business environment

Content:
1. Japanese / American Cross Cultural Business Negotiations
put emphasis on learning how Japanese business conversations develop, not just on learning business vocabulary and expressions.
2. Gift Exchange Practice
3. Decision Making Process of Japanese Companies
4. Socialization
5. General Information on Japan
(economic development, Japanese management system, etc.)